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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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18 March 1954

DRAFT MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: The 16 March Rhee Letter to President Eisenhower

1. The 16 March letter from Syngman Rhee to President Eisenhower appears to be a bald-faced attempt to obtain additional US military aid. By indicating once again that he ultimately intends to drive northward against the Communist forces and by hinting that he may not attend the forthcoming Geneva conference, Rhee is attempting to pressure the US into providing increased aid along the lines of his "alternate program." This characteristic maneuver follows the pattern of similar requests during the negotiation of the armistice agreement and the economic agreement.

2. The Rhee letter appears to indicate that the chances of a unilateral ROK resumption of hostilities in Korea are, if anything, lower than estimated in SE-48 in October 1953. Despite his statement that the time has come to give notification of his intention to take unilateral action, Rhee admits that such ROK action would require US logistical support and air and naval coverage.

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We continue to believe, as we indicated in SE-48, that the principal determinant in Rhee's decision to take such unilateral action would be his conviction that he could thereby involve US forces in a full-scale resumption of the fighting. We believe that measures taken by the UN Command subsequent to the publication of SE-48 have greatly lessened the likelihood of US involvement in such a unilateral action. Rhee's admission of the need for US support gives evidence of his recognition that this is true. In any event, we estimate that the Communist forces would make every effort, if such an attack came, to avoid the involvement of US forces.

4. Concerning the suggestion of an agreement for concurrent armed action by Chiang Kai-shek, we believe that regardless of any oral agreement between the two chiefs of state the Chinese Nationalist armed forces lack the amphibious and logistic capability to place any significant number of forces on the Chinese mainland without US concurrence and support.

5. We consider it almost certain that Rhee will not carry out his implied threat not to send a ROK delegation to the Geneva conference. Although he may make further attempts to use ROK

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participation as a bargaining tool, we believe that Rhee's unwillingness to have the fate of South Korea discussed and possibly settled in his absence will finally cause him to send a delegation.

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